



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

Reaction to overexposure to the sun. It involves the skin in areas most exposed to sunlight.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Red skin rash, sometimes with small blisters, in areas which were exposed to sunlight.
- Scaling patches.
- Fever.
- Fatigue or dizziness.
- Erythema (redness of the skin).

### CAUSES

- Sun poisoning is most likely to occur during hot seasons when ultraviolet light is strongest. It is triggered by exposure to the sun, usually in conjunction with sunburn.
- It is especially likely in persons who take medications that cause photosensitivity (increased sensitivity to ultraviolet light). The most common drugs include tetracycline antibiotics, thiazide diuretics, sulfa drugs and oral contraceptives. Topical drugs and chemicals can also cause a reaction (phenothiazines, sulfonamides, coal tar, psoralens).
- Some cosmetics, including lipstick, perfume and soaps, can also cause a photosensitive reaction.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Underlying infection.
- Previous episodes of sun poisoning.
- Metabolic disorders, such as diabetes mellitus or thyroid disease.
- Use of immunosuppressive drugs or any drugs listed under Causes.
- Medical disorders such as discoid lupus erythematosus, systemic lupus erythematosus or porphyria.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Stay out of the sun when possible if you have a history of sun poisoning.
- When exposed to the sun, use sunscreen lotions with a sun-protective factor (SPF) of 15 or more and wear protective clothing.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Symptoms can be controlled with treatment if you stay out of the sun. Allow up to 1 week for recovery.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Recurrence of the rash and other symptoms when exposed to the sun even for short periods especially in spring and summer.



## TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Determine any underlying cause such as drugs, cosmetics or a medical disorder. Photopatch testing can be used to identify photoallergic causes.
- Stay out of the sun during the hours of strongest ultraviolet light (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.).
- If you must go out in the sun, wear protective clothing and the most protective sun-screen preparation available.

### MEDICATIONS

- Chloroquine prior to sun exposure to prevent a recurrence of symptoms may be recommended.
- Topical steroids may be prescribed to reduce inflammation.

### ACTIVITY

No restrictions, except to avoid prolonged sun exposure.

### DIET

No special diet. Drink extra fluids to prevent dehydration.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of sun poisoning.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.